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TO
THE PRINCE REGENT,
*On his Proclamation against the
Reformers.*

New York, 10 Sept. 1819.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL
HIGHNESS,

That Proclamations are *not laws* we have to thank those, who brought CHARLES the deluded and obstinate to the block. Nevertheless they are documents, which ought always to have great weight with the people; because they never ought to be issued but upon proper occasions, and ought always to be evidently tending to the general good. Whether these circumstances belong to the Proclamation of the 30th of July last, we shall presently see.

I, of course, look upon this document as the work of your Ministers and their prompters; and shall, as I have a right to do, comment upon it without the least reserve. It contains denunciations and threats against great multitudes of Englishmen and Scotsmen. I shall examine it as to all its principal points; and shall, then, again humbly offer your Royal Highness *my* advice with regard to measures suited to the approaching crisis: for, a crisis is approaching, and that, too, much faster, I imagine, than the

seat-selling crew expect. It is, one would think, impossible for any man in his senses not to perceive, that a great change must speedily take place in the nation's affairs: yet, this stupid and insolent crew really do appear not to perceive it. They seem to resemble a gormandizing animal of prey, which is killed in the midst of its meal, and has its plunder and its breath knocked out of its body by one and the same blow.

“By his Royal Highness the
“Prince of Wales, Regent of
“the United Kingdom of Great
“Britain and Ireland, in the
“name and on the behalf of his
“Majesty.

“A PROCLAMATION.

“GEORGE, P. R.

“Whereas in divers parts of
“Great Britain meetings of large
“numbers of his Majesty's subjects have been held upon the
“requisition of persons who, or
“some of whom, have, together
“with others, by seditious and
“treasonable speeches addressed
“to the persons assembled, endeavoured to bring into hatred
“and contempt the Government
“and Constitution established in
“this realm, and particularly the
“Commons House of Parliament,
“and to excite disobedience to
“the laws and insurrection against
“his Majesty's authority:
“And whereas it hath been re-

“ presented unto us, that at one
 “ of such meetings the persons
 “ there assembled, in gross viola-
 “ tion of the law, did attempt to
 “ constitute and appoint, and did
 “ as much as in them lay, consti-
 “ tute and appoint, a person then
 “ nominated, to sit in their name
 “ and on their behalf in the Com-
 “ mons House of Parliament; and
 “ there is reason to believe that
 “ other meetings are about to be
 “ held for the like unlawful pur-
 “ pose :

“ And whereas many wicked
 “ and seditious writings have been
 “ printed, published, and indus-
 “ triously circulated, tending to
 “ promote the several purposes
 “ aforesaid, and to raise ground-
 “ less jealousies and discontents
 “ in the minds of his Majesty’s
 “ faithful and loyal subjects :

“ And whereas we have been
 “ further given to understand,
 “ that, with the view of better en-
 “ abling themselves to carry into
 “ effect the wicked purposes afore-
 “ said, in some parts of the king-
 “ dom, men, clandestinely and un-
 “ lawfully assembled, have prac-
 “ tised military training and exer-
 “ cise :

“ And whereas the welfare and
 “ happiness of this kingdom do,
 “ under Divine Providence, chief-
 “ ly depend upon a due submis-
 “ sion to the laws, a just reliance
 “ on the integrity and wisdom of
 “ Parliament, and a steady per-
 “ severance in that attachment to
 “ the Government and Constitu-
 “ tion of the realm, which has
 “ ever prevailed in the minds of
 “ the people thereof: and where-
 “ as there is nothing which we so
 “ earnestly wish as to preserve
 “ the public peace and prosperity,
 “ and to secure to all his Majes-
 “ ty’s liege subjects the entire
 “ enjoyment of their rights and li-
 “ berties :

“ We, therefore, being resolved
 “ to repress the wicked, seditious,
 “ and treasonable practice afore-
 “ said, have thought fit, in the
 “ name and on the behalf of his
 “ Majesty, and by and with the
 “ advice of his Majesty’s Privy
 “ Council, to issue this our Royal
 “ Proclamation, solemnly warn-
 “ ing all his Majesty’s liege sub-
 “ jects to guard against every at-
 “ tempt to overthrow the law, and
 “ to subvert the government so
 “ happily established within this
 “ realm, and to abstain from every
 “ measure inconsistent with the
 “ peace and good order of society,
 “ and earnestly exhorting them
 “ at all times, and to the utmost
 “ of their power, to avoid and
 “ discountenance all proceedings
 “ tending to produce the evil ef-
 “ fects above described :

“ And we do strictly enjoin all
 “ his Majesty’s loving subjects to
 “ forbear from the practice of all
 “ such military training and exer-
 “ cise as aforesaid, as they shall
 “ answer the contrary thereof at
 “ their peril.

“ And we do charge and com-
 “ mand all Sheriffs, Justices of
 “ the Peace, Chief Magistrates of
 “ Cities, Boroughs, and Corpora-
 “ tions, and all other Magistrates
 “ throughout Great Britain, that
 “ they do, within their respec-
 “ tive jurisdictions, make dili-
 “ gent inquiry, in order to dis-
 “ cover and bring to justice the
 “ authors and printers of such
 “ wicked and seditious writings
 “ as aforesaid, and all who shall
 “ circulate the same; and that
 “ they do use their best endea-
 “ vours to bring to justice all per-
 “ sons who have been or may
 “ be guilty of uttering seditious
 “ speeches and harangues, and all
 “ persons concerned in any riots
 “ or unlawful assemblies which,
 “ on whatever pretext they may

"be grounded, are not only contrary to law, but dangerous to the most important interests of the kingdom."

"Given at the Court at Carlton House, this thirtieth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and nineteen, and in the fifty-ninth year of his Majesty's reign."

As to the general charge of *sedition* and *traitorous* designs, it has so long been preferred against every one, who has, in any way whatever, shown a hatred of Corruption, Peculation, and Villainy towards the people, that it excites, now-a-days, very little attention. But, there are some points here, to which I shall pay great attention; because they exhibit to us something *new*.

Proclamations are *not laws*; nor are they, in the least degree, *binding*: they are, in fact, *nothing* in law, unless they be issued in *fulfilment* of some law. Now, this proclamation is grounded on no law, that I know any thing of. It was called for by no law. It was in fulfilment of no law. It was not, indeed, *unlawful*, because the king's prerogative authorizes him to issue notifications and advice, and warning to his people in this way. But, as to any new obligation, or check, that it can impose, there is none that the law knows of.

It is asserted here, that men, *clandestinely* and *unlawfully* assembled, have practised *military training and exercise*; and your Royal Highness has been advised "strictly to enjoin all his Majesty's *loving* subjects to *forbear* from the practice of all such military training and exercise, as they shall answer the *contrary* thereof at their peril."

What, Sir, is it come to this al-

ready! Only a few years ago, all those who were *backward* to be *trained* and *exercised* were set down as little better than traitors! Indeed! And is it become *dangerous* for the people, or any great portion of them, to learn to march, prime, load, and fire? What, then, shall we do another time for Volunteer Corps and Local Militia and Militia men?

This is a fine state for England to be reduced to. But, there is no *peril*, certainly, in men meeting to practice military training and exercise: no *peril* in it; I mean *legal peril*; for, there is *no law* which forbids it, and no law which authorizes the king to issue a Proclamation to forbid it. The people are expressly authorized by law to have "*arms for their defence*;" and, this was declared to be the law by an Act passed in a very few months after the people had made use of their arms against King James the Second, and had, by the use of these arms, *abated oppression* and made *a revolution*.

If the people be authorized to have arms for their *defence* against oppressors (for that was clearly meant), surely, they are authorized to learn *how to use* the said arms; for, else, of what advantage can be the possession of the arms? If they be not permitted to train and exercise themselves, in the use of arms, it is ridiculous to say, that they have a right to have the arms. It is not only a right, but a duty, to *resist oppression*. Upon this very ground is built your Royal Highness's claim to fill the throne after your father. To perform this duty the people are, by law, allowed to have arms: and, it necessarily follows, that they have a right, and that it is their duty, to *learn the use*

of arms: and how are they to learn that without *training* and *exercise*? No proclamation can take away this right. Nor can it impair it, in the smallest degree. And, it is curious enough, that BLACKSTONE, in citing instances, in which a Proclamation *would not be binding*, has this: "A Proclamation for *disarming* any Protestant Subject *will not bind*; because this would be to assume a legislative power." And, if the people be forbidden to learn the *use* of arms, they are, in effect, *disarmed*.

Therefore, I can see, may it please you, Sir, no *peril* at all in meeting to learn military exercise. It is easy to give the epithets *clandestine* and *unlawful* to such meetings. There may be *unlawful* meetings, to be sure, though I do not see very clearly how a *mere meeting* of any part of the people *can be unlawful*; but, if the meeting itself be not unlawful, I am quite sure, that the *training* and *exercise* are not unlawful. So convinced am I of the lawfulness of meeting, whenever any of us choose, for the purpose of military training and exercise, that I would be one to do it immediately, if I were now in England; and I should not think myself in any peril whatever.

After all, however, I am disposed to believe, that your Royal Highness has been wholly deceived as to this matter. This appears to be nothing more than the revival of the Bolton Bloodhound's old story about battalions meeting to exercise *in the dark*. The black-faced gentry of Lancashire seem loath to quit their trade; and their busy, place and pension hunting employers seem to be as reluctant as they to abandon a system, which has

afforded them so rich a harvest. These people, however, do not take into view the change in the state of things at *head-quarters*: if they did, they would not be so zealous.

Your Royal Highness was not informed, perhaps, that, in some parts of the country, the magistrates had resolved, previous to the date of your Proclamation, to *call upon some part of the people to come forth armed*, in order to act against other parts of the people. Clearly, then, here is an acknowledgement, on the part of the magistrates, that the people have a right to *use*, as well as to *have*, arms. And, if *one part* of the people are to come forth armed, why not *another part*? If those who approve of seat-selling have a right to come forth in arms, why not those who detest seat-selling? The *law* has, I am sure, made no distinction. The law has not said that arms-bearing shall be confined to those who live on the taxes. The law has not said, that those, who are, in time of war, *compelled* to fight in defence of the country, shall not, in time of peace, be suffered to carry arms for their own defence; especially *after* one part of the people have been openly called upon to arm. Against whom? It is in vain, Sir, to endeavour to disguise the fact: the great mass of the people desire a *Reform*; they have humbly sued for it by petition; their petitions have been treated with scorn; they now meet to express their sentiments in the way of declaration; they seek nothing that it is not lawful for them to seek. And, the *few* call on their friends and adherents to arm against the great mass. Surely, the great mass have a right to arm in their own defence.

In another part of the Proclamation, great stress is laid on the appointment of Sir CHARLES WOLSELEY by the people of Birmingham. They call him their *Legislatorial Attorney*: that is to say, a person having all the power they can give him to act for them in the affairs of *legislation*. It does not appear, that they have voted him to act as their representative in parliament. But, suppose they have? I cannot see in this any "*gross violation of the law*;" nor, indeed, any violation of the law at all. I am sure, that it is no violation of the statute law; and I should be glad to hear how the Attorney General will make it out a violation of the Common Law. It is neither treason, felony, sedition, libel, robbery, arson, burglary, nor larceny. What crime is it, then?—How does it violate the *law*? A law may be passed, or, at any rate, an *Act* may be passed, to make it criminal; but, certain I am, that it is not criminal as the law now stands; certain I am, that it is not *now* a violation of the law. It occurs many and many times in every six years, that men are chosen to sit in parliament, and that they are not permitted to sit. It appears, that, in these cases, the electors have chosen persons that they ought not to have chosen; or, that those who voted for them had no right to vote for them; or, that they have been chosen by wrong means; or, in a wrong way. And, what then? Are there any *violations of law* here? No; and, of course, no punishment follows. The Members are *not allowed to sit*; that is all. And, of these matters the Courts of Law cannot, and never do attempt to, take cognizance.—The Member for Birmingham may

be rejected; he may be refused a seat on the same bench with QUINTIN DICK; if he persist, the Sergeant at Arms may take him to Newgate. But, *that's all!*

The case is this: the people of Birmingham, a very large, populous, industrious, ingenious, and opulent town, think it unreasonable and unjust, that they should be taxed by men sent from the two huts at Gatton, from the one hut at Old Sarum, and from the pigstyes at Appleby. They, therefore, for many, many years, humbly petition, that this may no longer be, and that they may be permitted to send members to represent them in the Commons House. These petitions are treated with scorn; and, at last, the persons most active in promoting these petitions are seized, by authority of the members from Gatton and the like, and thrown into dungeons, without any form of trial; without any charge legally preferred; without being confronted with their accusers; and, in short, all the laws made for the protection of men's persons are wholly put aside. By-and-by, at the end of about a year, the dungeons are opened, and the imprisoned persons are suffered to go out; but, the men of Gatton and the like, pass a law to prevent all these persons from obtaining any sort of redress. The people of Birmingham, therefore, do not petition any more; but, very modestly, at a meeting publicly convened and openly held, select a gentleman, whom they think worthy of trust, and appoint him to go to the parliament as their representative, hoping, doubtless, that he will be admitted into the House.

Now, Sir, can there be a mode of proceeding less liable to a charge of violation of law than

this? Here is no *force* attempted; there is none talked of, or even hinted at. It is a mere *wish* expressed by the people of Birmingham, that this gentleman may be received as their representative. The wish may be *vain*; but it cannot be *unlawful*, merely because it is expressed in this new kind of way. It is, therefore, to miscall it, to call it *unlawful*. It may, perhaps, be unlawful, as things now stand, to allow Sir Charles *to sit*; but, it never can be unlawful, *to wish* him to sit; nor can it be unlawful in him *to ask* to sit. It frequently happens that men come into the courts of law, and demand possession of lands and tenements, to which they have *no legal claim*, nor even any *equitable claim*. Yet, such men are guilty of *no crime*; they are guilty of *no violation of law*. They have their costs for their pains; and there the thing ends.

Am I told, that the crime here consists in attempting to constitute a member of parliament without a *writ* from the king. I hope that no one will say this; because I well know, that those who passed the acts, which shut out the Stuarts, and which eventually brought your Royal Highness's family to the throne, were not assembled in virtue of writs from the king or from any body else. Those persons, finding no king at hand willing to call a parliament, *walked into the House*, and, having first passed an act to make themselves a good and *lawful* parliament, proceeded to the making of other acts; and very good acts they were too, and they are *in force to this day*! So that, at any rate, there may, in some cases, be parliaments *without writs*. It cannot, therefore, be a *crime* for a man to be requested to go and offer him-

self to the House without a *writ* to produce.

Of all the proceedings of the Reformers, it appears to me, that this step of choosing men to go up and ask admission into the parliament House is the *least violent*.—These envoys are not to go *armed*; they are not to be surrounded by armed men, nor to be backed by physical force of any sort. They are merely to go and present themselves to the Speaker; and, if refused a seat, they are to go back, of course, and tell their constituents what the Speaker and the House say. What, Sir, can be more harmless than this? What can be less turbulent? The very idea of violence is excluded?—There is nothing, it appears to me, better calculated to produce a patient waiting on the part of the people; and yet this act of theirs seems to have created the *greatest alarm*!

To be sure, the members from *Gatton* and from *Ilchester*, and the like, may fear, that in time, the parliamentary agents may find their way into the House *in good earnest*; but, why need any body else be *alarmed*? If, indeed, persons were thus chosen by the people to go and assemble in a parliament at a place *other* than St. Stephen's Chapel, there might be cause to fear, that the people would soon look towards them for laws. And, amongst the things, to which the people may be driven, this may be one. But, at present, there appears to be no thought of the kind; and, in short, not the smallest ground for alarm. Therefore, it was with particular sorrow that I saw so much made of the matter in your Royal Highness's Proclamation. However, this is a mere *incident* in the grand drama that is now performing. The seat-

selling system is struggling hard to prolong its life. It will fail; but, it will not die, till it has made and sustained numerous assaults, and those of a variety of sorts.

Your Royal Highness has been advised to ascribe the agitation of the people to "*sedition writings*." When has this charge not been made? And when will it cease? The state of the case is this: that about seven hundred newspapers, magazines, reviews, and other periodical works, together with tracts, pamphlets, and other publications without number, supported by those who live and fatten on the taxes, and left, unchecked by any law, to abuse whomsoever they please, who do not live and fatten on the taxes: all these are constantly at work *against Reform*, and only about fifty publications *for it*; and those fifty continually supervised and harrassed by the myrmidons of the law, who, in all manner of ways, suppress and destroy them. Add to this, that the tax-eaters have about *twenty thousand preachers* on their side, while the Reformers have but the solitary Mr. HARRISON of Stockport. Now, then, Sir, how good must our cause be, or how feeble our opponents.—Why do not the thousands upon thousands of our learned tax and tithe-eaters draw forth their pens? Why do they not *write* at us, instead of proposing to *shoot* at us? We appeal to the *reason* of the people. We produce *fact* and *argument*. We make our attack on the *mind*. Why do not our opponents meet us *there*?

But, Sir, the truth is, that the people want no *writings* to urge them on to endeavour to obtain a Reform. They understand the whole matter well. They know *now* perfectly what is the real cause of

their misery; and, neither dungeons nor axes will make them not know it. Pray, Sir, look at the Speeches, the Resolutions, the Declarations, and other documents, coming from the people themselves, at their several meetings. Compare these fine effusions of strong and clear minds with the poor, feeble, confused, muddy trash of the tax-eaters and their hirelings; and then say, whether this be a *deluded* people; then say, whether the cause, in which they are engaged, can *possibly fail*!—Consider, Sir, that light daily increases; that the *boys* of 1815 are now *men*; that the boys of to-day will be men in 1822; and that every month of the interval will give a fresh set of *men* to be added to our present numbers, seeing, that our doctrines cannot (as it is now acknowledged) be faced by our opponents of the press. No; Sir: the die is cast. There will be a Reform; and the only question is, *when* and *how*. If the whole of the printing presses were totally silenced, the cause would not be thereby retarded; and a partial silencing has been tried in vain. Truth has made her way, and she will make her way, in spite of all that can be done to oppose her.

Your Royal Highness complains, that the speakers at public-meetings endeavour to bring into hatred and contempt the government and constitution, as established in this realm, and PARTICULARLY the Commons' House of Parliament. Does your Royal Highness remember the motion of Mr. MADDOCKS? He offered to prove at the bar of the House; and he moved to be permitted to prove; that CASTLEREAGH, then a member of the House, a Privy-Councillor, and a Minister, had

sold a seat to Quintin Dick, and that Perceval, also a member, a Privy Councillor, and a Minister, had approved of the act; that Dick, not being willing to vote on the side of the ministers on the affairs of the Duke of York, had been by them, required to quit the said seat; that the House would not permit Mr. MADDOCKS to prove the facts; that Lord Milton said, that he did not think the worse of Castlereagh and Perceval for this act; and that it was, by many of the members alledged, that these two men ought not to be censured for it, *seeing that the practice was as notorious as the sun at noon-day?* Now, Sir, if you do remember this, it is, I think, impossible for you to believe, that any man can be so beastly foolish, as to waste his time in any *endeavour* to bring that House into *hatred and contempt*. Oh, no, Sir! The people do not employ their time, or their thoughts, thus, I can assure you. Their time is employed in work far different from that of endeavouring to *bring* the Gatton, Queenborough, Appleby, Old Sarum, Penryn, Grampound, St. Mitchel, Ilchester men, and the rest of the set, into *hatred and contempt*. They want to bring none of them into hatred and contempt: they want to *bring them to something else* as quickly as possible. The people themselves entertain a correct opinion of the whole set, and they know, that the rest of the world entertains the same opinion.

Perfectly true is your Royal observation, that the "welfare and happiness of this kingdom do, under Divine Providence, chiefly depend upon a *due submission to the laws*, and a *just reliance on the integrity and wisdom of parliament*." Perfectly

true. But, Sir, who are they who have violated and outraged, and who still violate and outrage the laws? Those who, in open defiance of the law that placed your family on the throne, annually pay *numerous pensions to foreigners* out of the fruits of our labour; those who, in open defiance of the same law, employ foreigners in military offices of trust; those who sell and traffick in seats as notoriously as the sun shines at noon-day; those, in short, who stand surrounded with Bills (passed at their own request, and voted for by themselves) to protect them against the justice of the laws which they have wilfully and daringly violated. These are the violaters of the laws; these are the men whom the people hate; and these are the men, whom your Royal Highness ought to denounce to the nation.

As to the *integrity* of Parliament, if the people do not *rely* on that after the affair of Quintin Dick, after that of Mrs. Clarke, after that of Lord Grenville's Auditorship, after that of the late Dundas, after that of Pitt and Boyd and Benfield, after that of the Corn Bill, after the Dungeon and Indemnity Bills, and after the grants to the Prince of Saxe Coburg and the Duke of York: after all these, if the people do not firmly rely on the *integrity* of parliament, I should be almost tempted to believe, that they never will rely on it again; though, one would think, that the *Parson's Indemnity Bill* was, of itself, quite enough to settle the minds of the people on this score. These men were receiving the tenth of the produce of the lands. The condition was, that they should *reside* at the places where they had solemnly vowed to take

on them the care of souls. If they did not reside, they were liable to a penalty in money. Many of them did not reside. They were informed against. *The legal proceedings were going on. The parliament stopped the proceedings; and then protected the delinquents against all the effects of their offences.* After this, not to rely on the *integrity* of parliament would argue in the people that degree of distrust, which would refuse belief to one risen from the dead. But, indeed, what more do the people want, or have they ever wanted, than the pension, grant, and sinecure list? Are there not proofs enough of *integrity* there? Burke's pension of three thousand pounds a year for life, with *two pensions of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds a year each pension, for FIVE LIVES AFTER HIS DEATH* (three lives to one pension and two to the other); if these, which now stand on the pension-list be not sufficient to make the people rely on the *integrity* of parliament; why, then, I say, Sir, that the people are a stupid and base race, wholly unworthy of your Royal attention.

As to the *wisdom* of parliament, I humbly beg leave to say, that I think there must have been some mistake; seeing that the wisdom of that body cannot possibly be questioned by any human being, except there should, which is not likely, be some one so unfortunate as never to have heard of their Bills for making the people eat pollard and bran amongst their flour, in order to add to the quantity of human food at the expence of the pigs and cows; of their various propositions about making corn dear, and making corn cheap; of the brilliant idea of

digging holes and filling them up again in order to relieve the wants of the poor; and especially of their manifold, multifarious and multiform measures relating to paper-money, cash-payments and sinking-funds. WHITFIELD, Sir, said well, when he said, "let devils doubt." And, faithless Devils, indeed, must they be, who doubt of the *wisdom* of those, who have pawned every inch of land, every brick and stone, every tree and every drop of running water in the kingdom, together with the produce of all its labour, in order to carry on a war against those principles of Reform, which are now ten thousand times more alive and more formidable than ever.

However, Sir, though it appears to me clear as day-light, that the people neither have, nor can have, any doubts as to the *integrity* or the wisdom of Parliament, I cannot suppose that, if they had such doubts, you have been advised to pursue the right course, in order to remove those doubts. Depend on it, Sir, that *menaces* never yet induced any one to believe in what he did not believe in before. The dungeon-bill and gagging-bill made very few converts to the Borough-system; and you may be well assured, that, in all such cases, an ounce of persuasion is worth a pound of force; and that, if persuasion will not do, nothing will do. The "*unfounded jealousies*," of which the Proclamation speaks are real, settled, *opinions*, and, indeed, *confirmed convictions*. The people know, that their sufferings arise from the Borough-system; they firmly believe, that the removal of that system would remove their sufferings; and no threats will induce them to give up that belief.

light of heaven, just as long as they pleased. No man, in lying down on his bed, could be sure that he would not wake up with the pistol of a king's messenger at his throat. Many were seized, *loaded with irons*, shut up in dungeons, kept there for nearly a year, without being furnished with any charge, without being confronted with any accuser; and, at last, when turned out of their dungeons to return to their ruined families, they found, that *a law* had been passed to *prevent them from obtaining redress*, and for *screening for ever those who had thus treated them*.

Were not these transactions, independently of the works of Oliver and Castles, and the rest of the conspirators, enough to give a shock to the people's mind? "*The laws!*" What laws were there *for them*? What laws were there for me, the venders of whose writings were, in open defiance of the laws, arrested all over the country and thrown into prison? Thousands of robberies were committed upon these persons; direct robberies in the acts of taking away their books. What *law* was there for me? Must not I be ready to spit upon the man who would tell me to *venerate the laws*? The writings of those who wrote *against me* had free circulation. No means were taken to stop them. In one place, a man selling my works, in an open market, was arrested, and had his books taken from him, while another, selling works in abuse of me, at the same moment, in the same place, was freely permitted to proceed. What *law* was there *for me*, then? What protection did I receive from the laws? Could I, under such circumstances, *hold the laws in veneration*?

The *language* of our opponents has, too, all along, been that of defiance; of contempt; of menace. JENKINSON said, at the out-set, that they were resolved to pursue "*the STERN path of duty*." That was, the *duty* of putting men into dungeons at their pleasure. Was this the way to re-

claim *misguided* men? Why did they not try to *persuade* and to *convince*? Had they no means of this sort to employ? At every subsequent stage, we have had *new menaces*; and yet, the people are as bold as ever, and well they may; for they now actually calculate, how many months their persecutors will have the power of keeping them in prison.

The kingdom exhibits, at this moment, the singular spectacle of a people well informed as to all the causes of national decline, ruin, and misery, and of rulers wholly ignorant of those causes. Hence the steady perseverance of the former, and the blundering, the shifts, and the expedients of the latter. The people have a constant theme of triumph. They have nothing to do but to take the description of the country, as given by the Boroughmongers themselves, and say: "*this, then, is what YOU have brought the kingdom to.*" For, Reformer here or Reformer there; Disaffected here or Disaffected there; still, it is the Boroughmongers themselves, who have *caused the ruin and misery*. "*They could not help it.*" Could they not indeed! Then it is high time, that they cease to have the power of preventing such ruin and misery. It is high time, that that power be placed in other hands.

If they were *wise*, they would instantly abandon their usurpations; for, all the evils which they dread, and justly dread, arise from those usurpations being persevered in. There are certain great things to be done before internal peace can be restored and before foreign insults or injuries can ever again be resented. And these things never can be done by a parliament constituted as the present parliament is. By prolonging the present system the danger is only augmented. It becomes more and more imminent every day. And, at last, it will become wholly inevitable and irresistible.

Suppose, Sir, that, by horse, foot, and artillery, the present movements of the people to be completely put a

stop to? Will that mend the prospect of the Boroughmongers? Will that bring gold into the Bank? Will that make people *think* their paper to be as good as gold? Will that augment their resources? Will that induce the people to fight in their defence in another war? Will that guard them against the force of the memorable example of the attack on French Assignats? There is, then, with respect to them, no end to anxiety and fear, as long as their usurpations last. The people know and even now *feel* the worst that they can know or feel. Their demand on the land for sustenance may increase; but their sufferings admit of no augmentation. They have arrived at the point when *any change* must be for the better. It is not thus with the Boroughmongers. For the change to ease them and secure them, it must *come quickly*. When their wild and visionary projects about paying in specie shall be proved to be the offspring of foolishness bordering on ideocy, they may consent to a *change*, perhaps; but, they will then be bowed down, and will appear in sack-cloth and ashes. Is there a man of them who can, with lips that do not quiver, contemplate the failure of these projects? If there be, he must be an idiot. And yet, I assert, that those projects *will fail*. However, it is *possible*, that they will fail; and, if they should, what utter contempt must the whole thing be held in! What scorn as well as what hatred will fill the breasts of the people? What remorse ought to seize those, who have occasioned all these miseries, in the hope of being able to accomplish those wild and visionary projects? The nation is now suffering under the operation of the *experiment of cash-payments*. It is in the state of an animal, upon whom Doctors *try* their drugs. The drug will not absolutely kill the people; but, it will serve to damn the reputation of the Doctors.

The thought, which ought principally to engage the mind of your Royal Highness, is, whether this state

of things can *last*. That it cannot last for any length of time is to me certain. What, then, is to *follow* it? Quiet submission to the boroughmongers? Never. Never will the state of 1816 return. There must be a change; and one of two things must come; namely, a *naked military despotism*, or, a *reform of the parliament*. Even the former would be far preferable to the present state of things; and this I say with perfect seriousness and sincerity; and, my reasons are, that the *oppression* would be less, because an army is more easily paid than the greedy bands of corruption.

But, what would a military despotism do for the *paper-money*? How would it prevent a *puff-out*? How would it enable the Boroughmongers to raise taxes or to get gold? Were there not three hundred thousand families of fund-holders to feed, the military despotism might do for a while; but, keeping down Reformers will not feed those families. Though I applaud the Reformers for all that they are doing; though I admire their spirit and talent; though I am warmed by their speeches and their declarations: still, I think, that their zeal goes before events; outstrips *time*. Time is at work for us most ably and effectually. Our good and true ally, THE DEBT, never flinches. This *pawn* upon the land and houses remains. It must be shaken off, or paid off: when the day of doing this comes, our day comes. During the next winter and spring the Boroughmongers will be *in the thick of their mess*. That will be a time for plying them with exposures of their folly; for exhibiting their weakness and their danger; for demanding our rights; and for showing to the timid rich, that the granting of those rights, and that alone, can save the kingdom.

As to that description of persons, who cry out against dungeon-bills and against horse, foot, and artillery; and who, at the same time, *abuse the Reformers*; these persons must be *fools* or *hypocrites*; for, unless they be

stark fools, they must know, that, unless the people be dungeoned or dragooned, *they will have a Reform*. The choice lies between a military despotism and a Reform; and, therefore, it is *unjust* in those, *who are against Reform*, to blame the dungeon and dragooning measures.

It is impossible for any man to foresee what will happen in the course of a few years. Time teems with great events. The profligate expenditure of past years has entailed a mass of suffering, which the nation cannot endure long. Millions will fall down into the class of paupers; but millions cannot actually starve. Before two years of the present progress could end, one half of the people would die by the high-way side. The air would be poisoned by the stink of their putrid carcases. It is perfect beastliness to suppose, that "*things will come about*." They will, if not interrupted, *go on*, because they *must go on*. There is constantly at work a propelling principle that will not suffer them so stop for a moment. This principle, this destroying principle, must be destroyed; or, it will totally destroy a whole people.

All the means of restoration; all the means of happiness; all the means of permanent tranquillity and glory, are within reach. They invite the hand of justice and of wisdom to use them. We see them all; we are in them up to our chins: and the Boroughmongers will not suffer them to touch our lips.

I desire and beseech your Royal Highness to reflect on the *progress* of this dispute between the Boroughmongers and the people; to compare the state of the disputants now with their state in 1793; to consider how great is the difference between these days and the days when the Parsons and Magistrates led on whole multitudes to burn Mr. PAINE in effigy! The Reformers in those days had *the people* against them: the people were then ignorant, prejudiced, bigotted, and besotted. They are now, thanks to

twenty-five years of war against truth and justice and humanity; thanks to the unbearable burdens created by that war; thanks to the sufferings which those burdens produce: thanks to all these, the people are no longer that which they were in 1793. They are the most enlightened people in the world. They understand all the cause of their sufferings. They are wise, while their oppressors are foolish. And, until the Boroughmongers have discovered a way of *taking conviction out of men's minds*, let them not indulge the hope of seeing the people what they were in 1793.

One reflection ought to be constantly alive in every mind; and that is, that the present state of things has been produced under the sway of the Boroughmongers. That it is a most horrible and disgraceful state of things is allowed on all hands. They accuse me and others, of *what*? Why, of *taking advantage* of this state of things in order to urge *on a change*, which change contemplates the taking of the sway out of the hands of these same Boroughmongers. This is very true; and is it not laudable in us? I, for my own part, have been for the last sixteen years, warning the Boroughmongers, that they would, by pursuing the measures that they were pursuing, bring the nation into the very identical state, into which they have brought it. And, am *I now* to hold my tongue? Am I not to take advantage of their disgrace, in order to urge *on a change*? Are they to be suffered to go on quietly, until their measures totally destroy us as a nation? They will never see prosperity accompany *their* sway. They can, by no possibility, cause prosperity to return. From *them*, that is, from their sway, it is gone for ever. They muddle along under difficulties that can never be overcome or diminished *by them*. They are, under the guidance and controul of a mass of loan-jobbing and stock-jobbing and exchange-brokering and taxing. They have anticipated all the resources

of the country. They have *pawned* all, down to the very labour of the poorest labourer. They have in their hands a nation *without proprietors*; seeing that no man has any thing that he can call his own. The tax-gatherer and the overseer have a direct property in every penny that comes into any man's hand. In such a state of things, all men, except those who feed on the taxes, must desire *a change*. In such a state of things what *industry* can exist? And without industry, how can *prosperity* exist?

The great bloated sots of Borough-mongers do not perceive, that the *means* of prosperity are taken away by their system. The asses do not see, that the *prosperity*, as it was called, during the war, was like that which is discovered in pigs, which have given to them, in a week, that which ought to be kept to feed them during two months. No doubt that a man of a thousand a year will, by mortgaging his estate for its full worth, and spending the money in a year, be monstrously *prosperous* during that year; but he will, for ever after be a beggar, unless he can wipe off the mortgage. This has been and this is precisely the case with our country; and, it is just as impossible for England to regain her prosperity under the Borough-System as it is for such beggar to regain his prosperity. The state of the Boroughmongers is, indeed, worse than that of the beggar; for, *they* cannot, by any possibility, *wipe off the mortgage* without annihilating themselves. What fools they are, then, not to let others come and do the job for them!

The real resources of the country are quietly and silently passing away. A London tradesman, whom I have just seen, and who, having sold off his stock, came out, in January last, with a few hundreds of pounds, says, that, one day, last November, the Overseer emptied his pockets about nine o'clock in the morning. He therefore went out, before dinner, and collected bills to the amount of twenty

two pounds. While he was at his dinner, a rap, rap, rap, at the door called him to, as he hoped, a customer. It was the taxgatherer for assessed taxes, who took away twenty one pounds eighteen shillings and ninepence, leaving him one shilling and threepence in his pockets. He returned to the table, and banging his fist down upon it said: "D— me if I live any longer in *England*!" Here he is, and though the drawing in of the paper-money has produced great depression; though he does not like the country, or people, so well as those he left behind him, and though he is in some alarm about yellow-fever; he says, that he has never, since he set up in business, known a day's happiness till now; for he was never, till now, free from that everlasting dread, in which he was kept by the overseer and the taxgatherer. What he now earns is *his*, and not the governments'.

Thus are the capital and industry of this man lost to England for ever. Thousands upon thousands are the instances of this kind. The resources of England are stealing away from her in every direction; and, indeed, who that has common sense, will remain to work for soldiers, pensioners, sinecure place-men and place-women, fundholders, and paupers (made such by the taxes), while he can, by removal, *work for himself*? The environs of all the cities here are filled with persons, who live on their means, who have come from England, in order to shake off the taxgatherers. Here they are keeping horses and carriages, though they could not keep so much as a single horse at home.

And, which is of no little importance, manufacturers and *makers of all sorts of machinery* are coming at a great rate. Power-looms are at work; and, though the progress is slow, it is sure; and, as to cheap cotton goods, England will very soon be cut off from this market. A man almost wholly without work here is better off than a constant labourer in England.

He eats and drinks far better. Those, who go back, are such as are of little worth. They are guided by caprice and whim. But, all the men of real value remain. They withdraw with their capital, skill and industry, from the gripe of the Boroughmongers.

In this way the very heart's blood of England is going off, drop by drop. When a man, with his capital in his pocket, is sailing down the Thames, what joy must he feel at the thought, that no taxing man can reach him any more! He need not care a straw whither the ship shall carry him, it being impossible that she could convey him to any land where he will be so heavily burdened as he has been in that which he has left behind him.

The cure for all these evils is a reform in the Commons' House of Parliament. Nothing short of this will do any good. All tricks, shifts and expedients are unavailing. Therefore, to obtain this reform has long been, and, until it be obtained, will be, the principal object of the labours and life of

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

POST-SCRIPT.—20th SEPTEMBER.

We have just heard of the *Battle of Manchester* of the 16th August. We have no knowledge of the event; but, I can see what the thing was: a mere downright act of unlawful violence, thinking any odium preferable to the continuation of the holding of Meetings. It is a thing which discovers, clearly, the *conscious weakness* of the Borough-villains. When men resort to desperate means, they discover their fears. I have been watching for the turn the thing would take; I now see the *Hole-Digger* is at work; and, let the people be assured, his measures will be desperate as his danger increases. I see no cause for us to fear; on the contrary. But, we must be cool. As the ruffians get in confusion, let us keep the more in order. My earnest hope is that the people will place their grand reliance on the Debt. That is our right dependence. Leave the tyrants to work with it, and it will soon bring them to yield us the utmost that we have all along been praying for, a Reform in Parliament. This we know we may obtain without risking any thing; and why should we? It is the *most effectual* as well as the safest way, to let the trout exhaust himself, while we hold the rod and the line and the hook.

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